

MEGS Address to Provincial Grand Chapter 6 June 2008

Companions I am delighted to welcome you all here this afternoon and I thank you for making time in your busy lives to support this Convocation. Our Annual Convocation is always a special day for the Province and none more so today. We have seen the retirement of two of our most distinguished Companions and we are more than grateful for their contribution to the life of the Province. However, theirs is not a retirement in the normal sense as I know that both Derek and Alan will continue, I hope for many years, to play a major part in the Province.

When I was appointed Grand Superintendent back in 2005 one of the first questions I asked Derek was "Is it wise for my Deputy to cover both Craft and Chapter" His answer was "No!" but he went on to advise that I should take 2 or 3 years before making the change. He said something about me being a shock for the Province and too much change too soon would not be wise. As always – well nearly always- I took his advice and today I know he was right and that the Province is ready to drive ahead to ensure that as many of our Brethren as possible complete their knowledge of Pure Ancient Freemasonry by being exalted. In E Comp Bob King I have a Deputy who can now be focused on increasing our membership and I know Companions you will give him every support.

He leads a strong team of experienced and dedicated Companions. I know that in E Companions Doug Hughes and Douglas Rainbird I have two Companions able to take the Province forward and build on all that has been done in recent years. They are ably supported by the two assistant to the Principals, E Comp Robert Kingsbury and the newly appointed E Comp John Baker.

Those of you who have been appointed or promoted this afternoon are already too well acquainted with Freemasonry to be under any illusions about what is now expected of you. But let me make the point clear. I do expect to see more exaltees, I do expect to see better attendance at the regular meetings and I do expect to hear you talking to those Brethren who are not wearing a Royal Arch jewel to think seriously about joining us. You are all ambassadors for the Royal Arch and I expect you all to be busy and active.

At Provincial Grand Lodge I said that it is now Provincial policy for every Lodge to appoint a Royal Arch representative. His role and duties will be discussed at a seminar in the autumn programme, but in brief it is to keep a record of the Brethren's chapter memberships and to encourage and guide those yet to be exalted. He needs to be

sensitive to meeting dates and venues and develop a relationship with a number of Chapters so that he will always be able to place a Brother in a suitable Chapter. Not necessarily the one linked to the Lodge. He is not to bully or threaten and no Brother is to feel that he may be in anyway disadvantaged in his career in the Craft if for any reason he decides not to be exalted.

I want to see much more use of the new Alternative Ritual. This is designed to make work sharing easier. It is not expected for experienced Companions to forget the old words to learn the whole of the revised Lectures. Companions IT IS INTENDED THAT THEY ARE SHARED. Where a Chapter is adopting the alternative ritual it is perfectly acceptable for a Companion, who is delivering the new words for the first time to have the book open. It is better for the exalte for the ritual to be done well and if that is achieved by subtle glances at the page for comfort and support that will make for a more enjoyable and meaningful ceremony for all. REMEMBER WE DO THIS TO ENJOY OURSELVES NOT AS A PUNISHMENT. Before you all interpret that as carte blanche to read the ritual I stress that this tolerance is whilst the alternative ritual is being adopted and is to ease the transition.

If the Lectures are divided up it will ensure more Companions can participate and that will tend to improve attendance. The Province will be keeping a careful eye on the effort made by the Chapters with the new Ritual. We will be encouraging and supporting and offering help and guidance as necessary.

I cannot leave the subject of the Alternative Ritual without congratulating the Priory Chapter display team. If you are in any doubt about how the new words work in practice, you need to see them perform.

Mentoring and support of our members is just as important as in the Craft, and whilst there are no immediate plans to introduce a full mentoring scheme the new Provincial Almoner has as his particular role mentoring in the Royal Arch. E Companion Ray Forster will be recruiting Companions on a centre basis to help with this and ensure that new exaltees are supported and encouraged as well as seeking to recover those who are less than regular attendees. He will be focusing on getting our attendance levels improved. To avoid any confusion W Bro Ray Larkin is the Provincial Grand Almoner in the Craft and he remains in charge of dealing with our members and their dependents in distress.

As we seek to build our membership the role of the Chapter support group takes on an even more important role. We have a number of

weak and struggling Chapters and I am immensely grateful to the members of the team lead by my Deputy and E Comp Tony Forwell. There are now 33 members of the team and the whole Province acknowledges their hard work. As we build our numbers it is important that our exaltees join strong and vibrant Chapters where they can fully enjoy and get the greatest appreciation of the ritual and its meaning. Chapters that are receiving support need to redouble their efforts to revitalise and make them attractive for our new members.

At Provincial Grand Lodge I omitted to mention the Cornwallis lecture. This has been announced in the Province via the eflash system but I take this opportunity to confirm that for 2008 the Lecturer is to be W Bro Clive Moore and the subject will be the Origins and History of the Tracing Board. I am most grateful to Brother Moore for being prepared to deliver his talk in the Province, and of course in East Kent. I am equally grateful to those who submitted papers for consideration.

Today is a result of much hard work by the Provincial Office, Scribe E and his team, and I congratulate them on the arrangements today. I also thank the Provincial Director of Ceremonies and his colleagues. This is his first full meeting in this role. He has also had the heavy burden of preparing me for the meeting.

Companions all their efforts would be of no avail if you had not come this afternoon to join us and participate in this Convocation. I am so grateful for your support for me, for your Companions and for all that you do in the Province which all goes to make West Kent an especially happy, and very special Province.